

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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THE 14TH WORLD CONVENTION ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The 14th World Convention on Christian Education is now history. But it is living history as 4,014 delegates return to their 64 countries with vivid memories of how faith in "Jesus Christ, as the Way, the Truth, and the Life" surmounts color and country loyalties and prejudices. They return to the heart of Africa, the Middle East, the Americas or other parts of the world with Japanese Kimono, camera, pearls, trinkets and a first hand experience of Japanese hospitality. This was the largest international gathering ever held in Japan and certainly the largest Christian meeting in this non-Christian country.

Month after month of Preparation committee meetings and ground work paid off as the delegates were housed comfortably; plenary sessions, sectional meetings and discussion groups were adequately cared for in spacious meeting halls; exhibits, snack bars, book stores and information desks covered the campus of Aoyama Gakuin University which was the convention site in the midst of this crowded metropolis of eight and three quarter million population.

During the convention the delegates met in regular plenary session every evening to hear the platform speakers from around the world at the great sports arena in Sendagaya. During the mornings they met in sectional groups for the study of particular aspects of Christian Education. The division groups studied the Christian Education of Children, Youth, Adult Work and Christian Education in the Home, General Christian Education and the Christian Responsibility of the Layman. The first Part of the morning was given over to platform speeches and then delegates met in smaller groups of from 15 to 30 where many pertinent problems on the education of Christians in this age were raised and answered by participants from all over the world in a way that raised further fruitful questions. In the small groups Japanese and English interpreters were used.

The afternoons were full with the exhibition of films and literature with the exception of Saturday and Sunday. The great Sunday School rally with church school children from all over Japan gathered on Saturday afternoon to see and hear the overseas delegates.

On Sunday morning, August 10, one hundred and ten churches in and around Tokyo had guest preachers from the convention. There was a great impact upon the minority church in Japan by the presence and vitality of the world-wide Christians. As one delegate pointed out: "the point and success of this gathering certainly lay in how all got together and realized the great world living unity of the Christian faith with stress in particular for Asians."

TWO GREAT CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Two great issues of today were brought out by the new President of the World Council of Christian Education and Sunday School Association, Bishop Shot K. Mondol of India and Bishop Otto Dibelius of Germany respectively. Bishop Mondol said, "India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Burma and Indonesia that were colonies before are free today. We are thrilled by this. But political freedom is not the only kind of freedom. We need freedom from sin--freedom from self. The worst tyranny we suffer from are chains of slavery that we have forged for ourselves from within.

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....It is not necessary for me to tell you in detail the difficulty we face due to restrictions being placed in the way of teaching our Holy Scriptures in our Christian schools. Some of the newly independent governments, which call themselves 'secular governments', are reluctant to permit the teaching of any kind of scriptures in public schools. Thus, a period in which Bible study was given every day--which meant so much to the spiritual life of the past generation--is gone. We are slowly developing a new generation of spiritual illiterates who do not understand the essentials of our Christian faith."

Bishop Dibelius of Berlin spoke on the subject: "Totalitarian Youth Training--A Challenge to the Church". He told how in a totalitarian country the training of youth is considered the monopoly of the State and others are forbidden to train and mold the minds of the young. Nevertheless he held out hope in the confidence that the historic, victorious church is the eternal church--the victory is Christ's.

OPENING NIGHT PROCESSION

Delegates were overwhelmed at the opening night's session when the 64 countries were represented in the great procession of banners, costumes and color. A conviction was experienced by many delegates that surely Jesus Christ is present in this group where so many had come so far to be with others in His Name--"If not here, then where?"

TOKYO GOVERNOR'S RECEPTION

Overseas visitors to the convention were feted at a mammoth reception in Kiyosumi Park in Tokyo as guests of the Governor of the Tokyo Metropolis on Monday afternoon, August 11. The Japanese sport of log-rolling was demonstrated. All the foreign delegates and 200 Japanese were invited.

REGISTRATION BY COUNTRIES

The largest number of delegates from any single country was, of course, Japan with 2,791 registered. Other large delegations were: the United States, 637; Canada, 115; Philippines, 85; Korea, 49; Taiwan, 28; Hong Kong, 26; India, 23; Australia, 21; Thailand, 16; England, 16; Burma, 10; Germany (East and West), 10; Indonesia, 10.

Other countries which sent delegations were Angola, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Borneo, Ceylon, Chile, Congo, Cuba, Denmark, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Finland, Ghana, Guam, Guatemala, Hawaii, Holland, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Malaya, Madagascar, Mexico, Mozambique, New Zealand, Nigeria, Northern Rhodesia, Norway, Nyasaland, Okinawa, Pakistan (East and West), Peru, Puerto Rico, Sarawak, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, South Rhodesia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanganyika, Tonga, Uganda. A total of 64 countries and 4,014 delegates. Many visitors who were not registered attended the plenary sessions and smaller meetings.

YOUTH SERVICE OF WITNESS

The Sunday evening session was a dramatic presentation, "The Uncertainties of Life and the Certainties of Faith" which highlighted the Youth Service of Witness. The Toda Drama Circle of Tokyo made this dramatic presentation. An offering was taken which will provide financial support for the Christian education of youth in countries around the world through the work and services of the World Council of Christian Education and Sunday School association.

SIGNIFICANT WELCOME MESSAGES

On the opening night of the convention, Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi appeared in person and delivered a message of welcome. He said, in part: Japan is not a Christian country in that those professing Christianity constitute a rather small minority of its vast population. But the fact is beyond dispute that Japanese Christians--humble followers as well as outstanding leaders of the faith--have made signal contributions to the social progress and spiritual uplift of the nation, wielding a powerful moral influence out of all proportions to their numbers through their exemplary conduct, their piety, their spirit of service and helpfulness.

The Rev. Michio Kozaki, President of the National Christian Council of Japan and also Chairman of the Japan Preparation Committee brought an address of welcome to the delegates. A quote from his speech follows:

"We rejoice in the fact that, despite this intense heat, we participate here tonight in a meeting, the grandeur of which has never before been experienced in Japan."

"During the last 10 years our common world has undergone, yes, even now is undergoing, truly eye-opening change. Since the close of World War II, in Africa and in Asia, independent governments of peoples of many new nations have been established --yet, although herculean effort is being made under the aegis of the United Nations to maintain the peace, the present world situation, far from being stablized, is one from which uneasiness has not been vanquished. Scientific progress achieved by mankind has thrust us into an atomic age--but this is no guarantee that world peace will obtain. In times such as these, we cannot but proclaim that great indeed is the mission of the eight hundred million believers who, in every nation of the globe, have faith in the Prince of Peace and live the creed of brotherly love for all mankind."

The Right. Honorary the Viscount Mackinsoshof Halifax, President of the WCESSA, was unable to attend the convention but his recorded address of welcome was heard by the delegates at the opening ceremony. He said, "each and every nation is searching for its leader but we know there is only one world leader, Jesus of Nazareth, the friend of little children who was himself the founder of our movement when he gathered the children round his knee and said, Forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven," Our task is to gather the children and youth of the world to Christ and through them to bring healing and peace to mankind.

QUOTES FROM THE WORKING SESSIONS

Highlighted at the division studies on the first day was the subject of the resurgence of secular humanism.

Some delegates pointed out that among the rising generation, secular humanism is taking the place of Christian spirit.

They said that secular humanism has resulted from Greek culture, and to tide over this crisis, Christians should develop Christian humanism based on Hebrew culture.

"Foundation of Christian education should, therefore, be concerned with how a man becomes not a secular but a 'real' man," they urged.

Other major subjects discussed were:

- (1) Significance of Christian home and non-Christian home.

Many delegates noted that there is a marked difference of the position of husband between the Orient and Western countries.

In the Orient and Africa, they said, husbands are more powerful, and in some countries they have "plural wives." Thus, in such areas, Christians are facing problems. For a solution, they said, there is no effective way but to carry out moral education and active evangelistic work for the people.

(2) How to protect children from social evils.

Many delegates were deeply concerned over children who are being "secularized" in the face of full-fledged development of "usually alarming" mass communications.

They said that parents must take care of their children more fully with effective measures in awakening them to self-conscience against social evils.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY OF LAYMAN'

"The Christian Responsibility of the Layman in the Church" was the subject of an address delivered by the Rev. J. R. Fleming of Singapore in Division Meeting V on August 8. He said, "There are four basic 'B's."

- (1) Being a Christian -- decision, faith, obedience.
- (2) Believing as a Christian--intelligent understanding of the faith, so as to explain it to others, or to stand up for it, amid conflicting ideologies.
- (3) Behaving as a Christian--not only in relation to conduct, character etc. as generally accepted, but accepting the responsibility to work out, with others, where Christian faith and obedience take us today in our society and the world--a task only begun.
- (4) Belonging as a Christian--in the light of what God's purpose is in creating a 'church,' and calling us into it, and making us members of Christ's Body--the evidence to the world of God's action-continuing--to be part of God's answer to the world's need, pain, loneliness, frustration, instead of being part of the problem.

These four points lead to specific responsibilities, and might be worked out in discussion."

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R. VEITH ON TEACHING THE BIBLE TO CHILDREN

The problems of teaching the Bible to children were discussed by Dr. Paul H. Vieth, professor of Yale University, in the Division I meeting on August 11. The Highlights of his address were as follows:

1. It is only in the upper levels of the children's division that the words of the Bible can become meaningful, and even then many of its concepts are incomprehensible. The Bible was not written for children, but is addressed to adults. This does not mean that the Gospel is not for children. It means, rather, that it must be mediated to them through adults--parents and teachers.
2. We reject as inappropriate three ways in which this problem has at times been met:
 - (a) Assume that the Bible has no place in the education of young children;
 - (b) Selection of only those narratives which are assumed to be within children's understanding, but often missing the true theological interpretation;
 - (c) Force upon young children much Bible content which is beyond them (as is likely to happen with the use of Uniform Lessons).
3. The truth of the Bible, as distinguished from its words, is communicated to the young through the attitudes and actions of the more mature who have responded to its witness and message. This is called non-verbal communication. The essence of God's revelation is love, and this can be experienced long before the word is understood. In the original revelation, of which the Bible is a record, God Himself often used non-verbal means of communication.
4. Some parts of the Bible can be communicated to the young without distortion by retelling them in the language of children. Selection will be based on relevance to their lives.
5. Some of the great themes of the Bible, such as creation, covenant, sin and forgiveness, love, judgment, come early into the experience of children, and can be used in bringing about awareness of and encounter with God.

6. Children respond early to the greatest story of all-- the story of Jesus. Its full theological significance is beyond them, but what is taught concerning Jesus should be true and not distorted. They are capable of an increasing measure of response in love and commitment.
7. A simplified, connected story of the Bible can be understood by children long before they can handle the Bible itself, and may serve to hold their later more detailed studies in perspective.
8. Conditioning to the Bible as an important and sacred book (very special book).

AUSTRALIAN LEADER ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN THE HOME

Mr. Vivian C. Stafford of Australia, "The Home and the Aims of Christian Education," on August 11:

1. There is a common task and mission for the Christian Church and the Christian family:

The goals set before Church and home come from the aims of Christian education.

The home, in its religious life and activity, is the Church at work; it is not another institution.

The home needs to find ways of achieving a creative family living of a wholesome and attractive form.

2. The Character of Parents:

The quality of Christian love which is the bond of fellowship. It differs from sentimentality, or possessiveness, or providing for material needs. The capacity to love.

The quality of dependability.

The quality of reverence for the child's personality.

3. The Home Environment:

Provision for surrounding the child with goodness, beauty, truth.

ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY CONFERS DEGREES

Ten prominent delegates attending the 14th World Convention were awarded honorary doctorates by President Masatoshi Matsushita of St. Paul's University(Rikkyo), Tokyo, in a solemn ceremony on August 7.

Explaining the reason for conferring the doctorates, President Matsushita said, "St. Paul's University had decided to confer the honor on the distinguished leaders for their own merit, and for their service to God and great contribution to mankind. We honor you as a symbol of unity in faith."

The recipients of the honorary degrees were:

Doctor of Laws--Bishop Otto Dibelius, Germany; and Coleman Burke, U. S. A.

Doctor of Divinity--Rev. Dr. David Robert Hunter, USA, Rev. John Havea, Tonga; Canon Timothy Omottaya Olufosoye, Nigeria; Rev. Derk K. Nsubuga, Uganda; and Rev. Americo Justaniano Ribeiro, Brazil.

Doctor of Humanities -- Dr. Gonzalo Baez-Camargo, Mexico; Dr. Paul Herman Vieth, USA; and Dr. Gerald E. Knoff, USA.

Dr. Otto Dibelius, President of the World Council of Churches, Head of the All-German Evangelical Church, and Bishop of Berlin, delivered an address on "The Abiding Concept of Law in a Changing World."

TOKYO UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY HONORS DELEGATES

Six foreign delegates to the current 14th World Convention were awarded honorary doctorates by President Hidenobu Kuwada of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary Sunday afternoon, August 10.

The recipients of the honorary Doctor of Divinity degree were:

Rev. Cheruthothil Eapen Abraham, India; Rev. Christian G. K. Baeta, Ghana; Bishop Otto Dibelius, Germany; Rev. Benjamin Ignacio Guansing, the Philippines; Rev. Elmer George Homrighausen, USA; and Rev. Wenceslao Oscar Bahamonde, Peru.

The honorary degrees were conferred on them in recognition of their meritorious contribution to churches and sacrificial work for Jesus Christ.

SPECIAL MEETINGS AND REUNIONS HELD

Alumni of Union Theological Seminary in New York, Southern Methodist University, Auburn College and Doshisha University held reunions at some time during the convention. There may have been others. Also, there were meetings on a confessional basis on Friday afternoon of the Convention. Regional meetings brought together those from various areas of the world with others from their general regions.

The Canadian ambassador and his wife gave a reception for the large Canadian delegation one afternoon and followed this with a buffet supper. This was a generous and hospitable overture on the part of the Ambassador and Mrs. Bull.

THIS ISSUE--ACTIVITY NEWS

This issue is longer than usual. But it does not begin to cover all of the aspects and contributions to Christian thought which were made at the Convention. This is an attempt to give our readers a sampling of the activities and addresses which were made.

